A Few Notes about Graphic Design on PowerPoint

Given the prevalence of PowerPoint in the academic and professional worlds, audiences will expect a polished look in your slideshow. This brief article will review some basic graphic design tips to follow in your PowerPoint presentations.

Theme

The PowerPoint slideshow should have a consistent theme, which includes fonts and color schemes. Keep the overall design of each slide uniform, especially when working in teams. It shouldn't be blatantly obvious which teammate worked on each slide because the feel of each one is totally different. For instance, if the slides in Brenda's main point have a yellow background and blue text, Luke's slides shouldn't be black and white, and Kelly's shouldn't be purple and black. Pick one background style—with color combinations that are easy to see and are not too jarring—and make sure you apply that style to all slides.

Moreover, make sure that the theme you pick makes sense for your topic. A PowerPoint presentation on why your classmates should rewatch *SpongeBob SquarePants* (or watch it for the first time) should have a juvenile feel to it, because it's a cartoon. A PowerPoint on why your classmates should watch *The Walking Dead* should have a dark and post-apocalyptic theme, because it's a show about a zombie outbreak that ends modern civilization. Likewise, make sure the theme of your PowerPoint presentation fits the feeling you want your audience to have toward your presentation and topic.

Fonts

There shouldn't be a lot of text used on the PowerPoint slides, but there will be some for the preview, transition, and review slides, as well as for headings and labels. Make sure that any font you use fits a few basic criteria:

1. **It fits the theme.** As mentioned above, there should be a consistent feel, and the font should fit into that.
2. **It's legible.** Remember the credo "Don't make the audience think." Complicated fonts (and especially scripts) that are not easily readable will make it tough for your audience to get the gist of the slide quickly.
3. **It's consistent.** Just like the color schemes and backgrounds, the fonts used throughout the presentation should be consistent. Generally, presentations use only two types of fonts—one for headings and another for labels.
4. **It's universal.** If you need to use a computer to present your PowerPoint that is different from the one you made it on, specialty fonts that are only downloaded to your laptop will revert to a more common font. This is likely to mess with your spacing and placement of the words. Be sure to pull the presentation up on multiple computers so you know if your fonts will appear as planned or if you need to try new styles.

Proofreading

Again, there should not be a lot of words on your slides, but please make sure that the few words that do appear are spelled correctly and pass thorough grammar checks. Typographical errors may be small, but they can easily cut into your credibility as an expert on the topic.